

Things to Do in Nashville with Kids: 20 Fun Family Activities



Taking a family vacation to Nashville? You are in for much more than country music. While Music City is famous for the Grand Ole Opry and Broadway, it is also packed with kid-friendly attractions, interactive museums, outdoor parks, animal encounters, and hands-on experiences that make it one of the best family destinations in the Southeast.

Whether you are traveling with toddlers who love playgrounds, elementary-aged kids eager to explore science museums, or teenagers looking for exciting adventures, Nashville offers something for every age. From feeding giraffes at one of the nation's top zoos to climbing adventure towers, hiking scenic trails, and discovering Tennessee's history through interactive exhibits, families can easily fill an entire weekend without running out of things to do.

This guide highlights the best things to do in Nashville with kids, along with practical travel tips to help parents plan a smoother, more enjoyable trip.

Nashville Family Trip Planner

Best For	Families with toddlers, kids & teens
Ideal Trip	2 to 4 days
Best Time to Visit	April-May & September-October
Rental Car	Recommended
Top Attractions	Nashville Zoo, Adventure Science Center & Centennial Park
Rainy Day Options	Museums, Adventure Science Center & Escape Rooms
Walkability	Downtown is walkable, but most attractions require driving

20 Best Things to Do in Nashville with Kids

1. Nashville Zoo at Grassmere

- **Best For:** Ages 2-12 ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 3-4 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Mostly Outdoor
- **Stroller Friendly:** Yes

If you are only visiting one attraction with children, make it the Nashville Zoo. Home to more than 3,000 animals representing hundreds of species, the zoo offers far more than traditional exhibits. Kids can feed giraffes, ride the Wild Animal Carousel, explore one of America's largest community playgrounds, and watch scheduled keeper talks throughout the day. Wide pathways, shaded picnic areas, and family facilities make it especially easy for parents with younger children.

Parent Tip: Arrive before 10:00 AM and head directly to the Jungle Gym playground before it becomes crowded.

Nearby Attractions: SOAR Adventure Tower, Grassmere Historic Home.

2. Adventure Science Center

- **Best For:** Ages 4-14 ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Indoor
- **Rainy Day:** Excellent Choice

The Adventure Science Center turns learning into an adventure through more than 175 interactive exhibits covering space exploration, engineering, weather, biology, and physics. Children can climb inside the multi-story Adventure Tower, experiment with hands-on science stations, explore the state-of-the-art planetarium, and even experience simulated space missions. It's one of Nashville's best rainy-day attractions and keeps curious young minds engaged for hours.

Parent Tip: Visit on weekday mornings outside school holidays for shorter lines at the most popular exhibits.

Nearby Attractions: Downtown Nashville, Bicentennial Capitol Mall.

3. Centennial Park & The Parthenon

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 1-2 hours
- **Admission:** Park Free | Parthenon Paid
- **Outdoor/Indoor:** Both

Centennial Park is one of Nashville's most family-friendly green spaces. Children have plenty of room to run, feed ducks around the lake, and enjoy a picnic while parents relax beneath shaded trees. The highlight is the impressive full-scale replica of the ancient Greek Parthenon, which houses an art museum and a towering 42-foot statue of Athena inside. It combines outdoor recreation with a fun educational experience.

Parent Tip: Bring snacks or lunch and enjoy a picnic before visiting the Parthenon.

Nearby Attractions: Vanderbilt University, Midtown restaurants.

4. Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum

- **Best For:** Ages 7+ ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor:** Yes

Many parents overlook this museum, assuming it is designed only for adults. In reality, children often enjoy the interactive exhibits, instrument displays, colorful stage costumes, and the Taylor Swift Education Center, where younger visitors can

participate in creative art and music activities. Even kids unfamiliar with country music quickly become fascinated by the stories behind famous performers and iconic instruments.

Parent Tip: Families with younger children should head directly to the Taylor Swift Education Center before exploring the rest of the museum.

Nearby Attractions: Broadway, Bridgestone Arena, Johnny Cash Museum.

5. Nashville Shores Water Park

- **Best For:** Ages 5-15 ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** Full Day
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Summer temperatures in Nashville can be intense, making Nashville Shores one of the city's most popular family destinations. The park features exciting water slides, wave pools, lazy rivers, splash playgrounds, and dedicated areas for toddlers. Families can also enjoy paddleboarding, kayaking, and relaxing along Percy Priest Lake, turning it into an entire day of fun.

Parent Tip: Rent a locker early and arrive when the park opens to enjoy the most popular slides before long afternoon lines develop.

Nearby Attractions: Percy Priest Lake recreation area.

6. Tennessee State Museum

- **Best For:** Ages 6+ ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 1.5-2 hours
- **Admission:** FREE
- **Indoor:** Yes
- **Rainy Day:** Excellent Choice

The Tennessee State Museum is one of Nashville's best free attractions for families. Modern exhibits use artifacts, interactive displays, videos, and hands-on learning stations to tell the story of Tennessee from Native American cultures to the Civil War and the state's role in country music. The museum is spacious, well organized, and easy to navigate, making it enjoyable even for children who normally aren't interested in history.

Parent Tip: Pick up the family activity guide at the entrance to keep younger children engaged throughout the visit.

Nearby Attractions: Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park, Nashville Farmers' Market.

7. Cheekwood Estate & Gardens

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Both

Cheekwood Estate & Gardens offers 55 acres of beautifully landscaped gardens, seasonal flower displays, woodland trails, sculptures, and an impressive historic mansion. Families visiting during spring can enjoy blooming tulips and cherry blossoms, while fall brings colorful foliage and seasonal events. Throughout the year, Cheekwood also hosts family festivals, children's activities, and interactive exhibits designed to encourage outdoor exploration.

Parent Tip: Check the event calendar before visiting. Seasonal exhibitions and children's programs often provide extra entertainment beyond the gardens.

Nearby Attractions: Belle Meade, Percy Warner Park.

8. Andrew Jackson's Hermitage

- **Best For:** Ages 8+ ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Both

The Hermitage offers families a fascinating glimpse into early American history at the former home of the seventh U.S. president, Andrew Jackson. Beyond the mansion tours, children can explore historic cabins, gardens, walking trails, and farm buildings while learning how people lived during the early 1800s. Interactive exhibits and costumed interpreters make history more engaging than a typical museum visit.

Parent Tip: Older children usually enjoy the self-guided grounds tour more than the indoor house tour, so allow extra time outside.

Nearby Attractions: Stones River Greenway, Nashville Shores.

9. Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 1-2 hours
- **Admission:** FREE
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Located just north of downtown, Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park combines open green space with educational exhibits and impressive monuments celebrating Tennessee's history. Children enjoy walking through the large granite map of Tennessee, exploring the World War II memorials, and running through the park's spacious lawns. Parents will appreciate the excellent views of the Tennessee State Capitol and the peaceful atmosphere away from Broadway's crowds.

Parent Tip: Visit in the morning before exploring the nearby Tennessee State Museum and Farmers' Market for an easy half-day itinerary.

Nearby Attractions: Tennessee State Museum, Nashville Farmers' Market.

10. Nashville Farmers' Market

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 1-2 hours
- **Admission:** Free Entry
- **Indoor/Outdoor:** Both

The Nashville Farmers' Market is much more than a place to buy fresh produce. Families can browse local artisan shops, watch seasonal events, sample homemade treats, and choose from more than twenty international food vendors serving everything from barbecue and pizza to authentic Mexican, Asian, and Mediterranean cuisine. It's an excellent place to introduce children to new foods while enjoying a relaxed atmosphere near several major attractions.

Parent Tip: Visit around lunchtime when the food hall is fully open, allowing every family member to choose something different without waiting for a traditional restaurant.

Nearby Attractions: Tennessee State Museum, Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park.

11. Shelby Bottoms Nature Center & Greenway

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** FREE
- **Outdoor:** Yes
- **Stroller Friendly:** Yes

If your family enjoys nature, Shelby Bottoms is one of Nashville's best-kept secrets. This 960-acre urban nature preserve features more than five miles of paved greenways, wooden boardwalks, wetlands, forests, and open meadows where children can safely explore. Along the trails, families frequently spot turtles, rabbits, deer, butterflies, and dozens of native bird species. The Nature Center

offers interactive exhibits about Tennessee's wildlife, making this both an educational and relaxing escape from the busy downtown attractions.

Parent Tip: Bring bicycles if possible. The paved Greenway is one of the easiest and safest family bike rides in Nashville.

Nearby Attractions: East Nashville restaurants, Cumberland River Greenway.

12. Radnor Lake State Park

- **Best For:** Ages 5+ ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** FREE
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Located just 20 minutes south of downtown, Radnor Lake State Park offers one of the most peaceful outdoor experiences in Middle Tennessee. Easy walking trails wind around the scenic lake, where families regularly spot deer, turtles, owls, herons, and other wildlife. Unlike many state parks, the trails here are well maintained and suitable for beginners, making it an excellent introduction to hiking for children. The calm surroundings also provide a welcome break from Nashville's busy entertainment districts.

Parent Tip: Visit early in the morning when wildlife is most active and temperatures are cooler during summer.

Nearby Attractions: Brentwood, Cheekwood Estate & Gardens.

13. The Escape Game Nashville

- **Best For:** Ages 10+ ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 1 hour
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor:** Yes

- **Rainy Day:** Excellent Choice

Older children and teenagers will love working together to solve puzzles inside one of Nashville's highest-rated escape rooms. Each themed adventure challenges families to uncover clues, crack codes, and complete missions before time runs out. With multiple difficulty levels available, everyone can participate regardless of previous experience. It's a fantastic activity for rainy afternoons or families looking for something different beyond museums and parks.

Parent Tip: Reserve your preferred time online several days ahead, especially during weekends and school holidays.

Nearby Attractions: Downtown Nashville, Broadway, Assembly Food Hall.

14. SOAR Adventure Tower

- **Best For:** Ages 6-15 ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 2 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Located next to the Nashville Zoo, SOAR Adventure Tower is one of the city's most exciting attractions for energetic children. The four-level climbing structure features more than 100 obstacle course elements, rope bridges, cargo nets, balance challenges, and zip-line style activities. Different difficulty levels allow younger children and adventurous teenagers to participate safely while building confidence and teamwork skills. Parents can either join the fun or watch comfortably from the ground.

Parent Tip: Wear closed-toe athletic shoes and book morning sessions during summer to avoid the afternoon heat.

Nearby Attractions: Nashville Zoo at Grassmere.

15. Lucky Ladd Farms

- **Best For:** Ages 2-10 ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** Half Day
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Located about 40 minutes from downtown Nashville, Lucky Ladd Farms is one of Tennessee's most popular family attractions during spring and fall. Children can pet farm animals, ride ponies, race down giant slides, explore playgrounds, navigate corn mazes, and enjoy seasonal events throughout the year. The relaxed farm setting gives younger children plenty of space to run, climb, and interact with animals in a safe environment, making it a favorite weekend destination for local families.

Parent Tip: Visit during weekdays if possible to avoid the larger weekend crowds, especially during pumpkin season.

Nearby Attractions: Arrington Vineyards (for adults after the farm visit), scenic Williamson County countryside.

16. Musicians Hall of Fame & Museum

- **Best For:** Ages 8+ ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 1.5-2 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor:** Yes
- **Rainy Day:** Excellent Choice

Unlike the Country Music Hall of Fame, the Musicians Hall of Fame celebrates the talented session musicians behind thousands of hit records across every genre, including country, rock, pop, blues, jazz, and R&B. Families can see famous instruments, interactive exhibits, and even step into a recreated recording studio to learn how songs are produced. Older kids interested in music, technology, or recording will especially enjoy this hands-on experience.

Parent Tip: If your family has already visited the Country Music Hall of Fame, this museum offers a completely different perspective on Nashville's music industry.

Nearby Attractions: Downtown Nashville, Broadway, Tennessee State Museum.

17. Grand Ole Opry Backstage Tour

- **Best For:** Ages 8+ ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** 2-3 hours
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Indoor:** Yes

The Grand Ole Opry is one of Nashville's most famous attractions, and families don't have to attend a late-night concert to enjoy it. During the daytime backstage tour, children can walk behind the scenes, visit artists' dressing rooms, stand on the legendary stage, and learn how America's longest-running live radio show is produced. Even children who aren't country music fans usually enjoy seeing where famous performers prepare before each show.

Parent Tip: If your children are old enough to stay up late, attending a live Opry performance creates an unforgettable family memory.

Nearby Attractions: Gaylord Opryland Resort, Opry Mills Mall.

18. Cumberland River Greenway & John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 1-2 hours
- **Admission:** FREE
- **Outdoor:** Yes

The John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge offers one of Nashville's most iconic skyline views and is an easy walk for families. Stretching more than half a mile

across the Cumberland River, the bridge provides plenty of space for children to safely walk, ride scooters, or simply enjoy watching boats pass below. Sunset is especially beautiful as downtown lights begin to illuminate the skyline, making it one of the city's best free photo opportunities.

Parent Tip: Bring everyone back after dinner to watch the city light up. Kids love seeing Broadway's colorful neon signs from above.

Nearby Attractions: Riverfront Park, Broadway, Ascend Amphitheater.

19. Wave Country Water Park

- **Best For:** Ages 3-14 ★★★★★☆
- **Time Needed:** Half Day
- **Admission:** Paid
- **Outdoor:** Yes

Wave Country is an excellent choice for families looking for affordable summer fun. The park features two large wave pools, exciting water slides, splash areas, and shallow play zones designed for younger children. Because it is smaller than Nashville Shores, families often find it easier to navigate with toddlers and younger kids. It's a great way to cool off during Nashville's hot summer afternoons without spending an entire day at a larger resort-style water park.

Parent Tip: Arrive shortly after opening for the shortest slide lines and plenty of shaded seating.

Nearby Attractions: Shelby Bottoms Greenway, Two Rivers Park.

20. Goo Goo Chocolate Co.

- **Best For:** All Ages ★★★★★
- **Time Needed:** 45-60 minutes
- **Admission:** Free to Visit (Experiences Extra)

- **Indoor:** Yes

No family vacation is complete without dessert, and Goo Goo Chocolate Co. is one of Nashville's sweetest stops. Famous for creating America's first combination candy bar in 1912, the shop offers interactive chocolate-making classes, factory demonstrations, and plenty of delicious samples. Children can even customize their own Goo Goo Cluster using chocolate, caramel, peanuts, marshmallow nougat, and other toppings, creating a fun souvenir that's almost too good to eat.

Parent Tip: Book the chocolate-making experience in advance during weekends and school vacations because spots often sell out.

Nearby Attractions: Broadway, Country Music Hall of Fame, Riverfront Park.

Best Time to Visit Nashville with Kids

Choosing the right season can make your family trip even more enjoyable.

Spring (April-May) ★★★★★

Spring is widely considered the best time to visit Nashville with kids. Mild temperatures, blooming parks, and comfortable walking weather make it perfect for outdoor attractions like the zoo, Cheekwood, and Centennial Park.

Summer (June-August) ★★★★★☆

Summer brings long days and plenty of family events, but afternoon temperatures regularly exceed 90°F (32°C). Plan outdoor activities early in the morning and save museums or indoor attractions for the hottest part of the day.

Fall (September-October) ★★★★★

Fall combines cooler weather with colorful foliage, pumpkin patches, harvest festivals, and comfortable sightseeing conditions. It's another excellent season for family vacations.

Winter (November-February) ★★★★★☆

Winter offers fewer crowds, lower hotel prices, and festive holiday events. Although some outdoor attractions are quieter, museums and indoor activities remain excellent year-round options.

Family Travel Tips for Nashville

- **Stay Downtown or Midtown** to minimize driving time between attractions.
 - **Purchase attraction tickets online** before your trip, especially during holidays and school breaks.
 - **Pack sunscreen, refillable water bottles, and comfortable walking shoes**, particularly during warmer months.
 - **Combine nearby attractions** into one day to reduce driving and maximize your time.
 - **Schedule indoor attractions after lunch** when temperatures are highest.
 - **Use rideshares if staying downtown**, but renting a car is more convenient for families planning to visit the zoo, Cheekwood, Radnor Lake, or Lucky Ladd Farms.
 - **Build in downtime.** Nashville has plenty of parks and green spaces where children can burn off energy between museums and attractions.
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Conclusion

Nashville offers far more than live country music. Families will discover world-class zoos, interactive science museums, beautiful parks, outdoor adventures, and hands-on attractions that keep children entertained from morning to evening. Whether you are planning a weekend getaway or a longer vacation, Music City provides the perfect balance of education, entertainment, and outdoor fun for every age group.

By combining a few of these attractions into a well-planned itinerary, you will create lasting memories while experiencing a side of Nashville that many visitors never see.

Take this complete family itinerary with you and enjoy offline access to attraction tips, planning advice, and kid-friendly recommendations throughout your Nashville adventure.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is Nashville a good destination for families?

Yes. Nashville offers excellent attractions for families, including zoos, museums, parks, water parks, hiking trails, and interactive educational experiences suitable for children of all ages.

What are the best free things to do in Nashville with kids?

Centennial Park, Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park, Shelby Bottoms Greenway, the Tennessee State Museum, and the John Seigenthaler Pedestrian Bridge are among the best free family attractions.

How many days do families need in Nashville?

Three days is ideal. It allows enough time to visit major attractions like the zoo, Adventure Science Center, Centennial Park, and several museums without feeling rushed.

Is Nashville stroller-friendly?

Yes. Most major attractions, including the Nashville Zoo, Centennial Park, Adventure Science Center, and the Country Music Hall of Fame, are stroller accessible.

Should families rent a car in Nashville?

If you're staying downtown and only visiting central attractions, rideshares work well. However, families planning to visit the zoo, Radnor Lake, Cheekwood, or Lucky Ladd Farms will find renting a car much more convenient.

What is the best age for kids to visit Nashville?

Children between **4 and 12 years old** will find the widest variety of activities, although Nashville also offers plenty of attractions suitable for toddlers and teenagers.